

During General Assembly

AHATA ELECTS ITS NEW BOARD FOR 2009



ORANJESTAD – During a General Assembly, the Aruba Hotel and Tourism Association (AHATA) established its new board of directors for 2009. The annual general meeting among membership, held recently at the Westin Aruba, allowed for elections as well as for plain speaking about the outlook for tourism next year and the appropriate actions being taken in response to global economic trends.

“For Aruba, the worldwide economic slowdown has translated into a 20% dip in advanced bookings,” AHATA CEO and President Rob Smith frankly states. “We are well aware of current circumstances and have been pro-active in our response. History teaches us that, in times of crisis, our booking window grows very short. Our goal is to ensure Aruba stays at the forefront of our consumers’ minds. Every effort is being made to mitigate shortfalls in tourism numbers. The continuity of our action plans will go forward with a 2009 board that comprises some of our best minds in the industry.”

With elections for the new board accomplished, AHATA can depend upon strong leadership in meeting current challenges with 2009 Board members including Chairman Rick Zeolla (Vice President and General Manager, Aruba Marriott), First Vice Chair Alex Nieuwmeyer (Managing Director, Divi Caribbean), Second Vice Chair Warren Stanley (General Manager,

Atlantis), Treasurer Javier Wolter (Managing Director, CMB), Secretary Ewald Biemans (Managing Director/Owner, Bucuti) and Directors: Susan Santiago (General Manager, Hyatt), Eduardo de Veer (President and CEO, MetaCorp), Richard Roy (Hotel Manager, Westin), Louis Philippe (General Manager, Holiday Inn), Gary Jutz (General Manager, Radisson), Joe Najjar (General Manager, La Cabana), Lisette Malmberg (Director, De Palm) and Peter Steinmetz (Managing Director, AAA).

During the GA, Rick Zeolla, who will take over the duties of the chairman of the board in 2009, commented on the opportunities available to the island as well as the realities that will affect the island next year. He also complimented the elected Board, as well as the staff at AHATA, saying that he felt the right tools were in place to mitigate the current circumstances. With his own experiences and successes in the industry well known, and having been a part of the Aruban community for five years, strong confidence was voiced for his election as the 2009 AHATA chairperson by the association’s membership.

AHATA, whose member companies run the wide breadth of the tourism industry, from large hotel properties and timeshare resorts to activity companies and small service providers, utilizes the combined strength and knowledge of its

members in supporting positive change locally as well as in acting internationally in carrying out marketing support for the destination of Aruba. AHATA, in cooperation with the Aruba Tourism Authority, is also responsible for the Aruba Convention Bureau in the U.S.

The recent General Assembly helped to clarify existing goals, and to further bring together its members. The evening ended with a Networking in Style event during which members mixed and mingled in the social environment afforded by the Westin Gallery.



1-Alex Nieuwmeyer 2-Ewald Biemans 3-Eduardo de Veer 4-Gary Jutz 5-Javier Wolter 6-Joe Najjar 7-Lisette Malmberg 8-Louis Philippe 9-Peter Steinmetz 10-Richard Roy 11-Rick Zeolla 12-Susan Santiago 13-Warren Stanley 14-GA AHATA Board Officers Rick Zeolla Chairperson Eduardo de Veer Director